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## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

*Athanase de Mézières and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1768-1780.* Documents Published for the First Time, from the Original Spanish and French Manuscripts, chiefly in the Archives of Mexico and Spain; Translated into English; Edited and Annotated. By Herbert Eugene Bolton, Ph. D., Professor of American History in the University of California. Two volumes. (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company. 1914. Pp. 351, 392. \$10 net.)<sup>1</sup>

These volumes may be regarded as part of the first fruits of the Carnegie *Guides* to foreign archives. Except for a few documents in the Bancroft Library of the University of California, the Bexar archives of the University of Texas, and the Archives du Ministère des Colonies at Paris, the material was all unearthed by Professor Bolton's work in the Mexican archives and the similar labor of Mr. Hill in Spain. Covering less than a dozen years immediately following the transfer of Louisiana to Spain, they present in minute detail a picture of actual government on that interesting frontier where French and Spanish influence had struggled for supremacy since the beginning of the eighteenth century, and where the French were now eliminated only to be succeeded by the still more aggressive English. The activity and the comprehensiveness of the administration will be a surprise to those who are accustomed to the common estimate of Spain's 'stupid and slothful' colonial system.

The purpose of the work is thus stated by the compiler: "The history of the French and Spanish régimes in Texas and Louisiana is to a large extent the history of an Indian policy, in its various aspects; and for light on the Indian affairs of what are now Texas, western Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma during the period between 1768 and 1780, and on the problems of Indian control in that period, as well as on the establishment of Spanish rule in western Louisiana, there is perhaps no other single group

<sup>1</sup>This review appears also in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* for September, 1914.

of documents in existence so important as the correspondence and reports of De Mézières here published."

Athanase de Mézières was an educated Parisian, of noble connections, who spent the most of his life at Natchitoches, as soldier, trader, and planter. At the close of the French régime he was lieutenant-commander of the post, and with its transfer to Spain he seems to have risen at once to the position of commander, which he held, with short leaves of absence, until his death in 1779. There are two hundred and fifty-two documents in the collection, written by, to, or concerning De Mézières. A very few are personal; the others reveal in great detail the various phases of Spain's frontier government. The documents are grouped around ten topics, which take their titles in general from De Mézières's plans and activities, but since these developed chronologically, the arrangement of the whole series is, with a few exceptions, chronological. The title of the sixth group, "Frontier Problems," would apply equally well to the whole book—the problems being to win and hold the allegiance of the frontier tribes to Spain; to expel unlicensed traders and vagabonds from among them; to prevent the encroachment of the Anglo-American traders; to check the perennial ravages of the Apache and the intermittent hostility of the Comanche; and to maintain and develop the germ of civilization in the crude wilderness settlements.

As an historical source Professor Bolton has skimmed the cream of the collection for his introduction. A map, based on these and other documents, shows the location of the principal Texan tribes at the close of the eighteenth century, and a concise discussion explains inter-tribal relations and administrative difficulties.

In the vexing task of opposing French advance from the east the Spanish officials in Texas were only partially successful; for French influence was firmly established over the Caddo, Wichita, and Tonkawan tribes of the Red River and upper Brazos and Colorado valleys, and Professor Bolton says that a line extended westward through Natchitoches and Adaes would define pretty accurately the actual boundary of French and Spanish control—which inclines one to judge with greater leniency the sincerity of those stubborn Americans who later contended that the Louisiana Purchase included Texas. Another interesting fact disclosed by

the documents, and brought out by the introduction, is the early advance of the Anglo-American trading frontier into upper Louisiana and Texas. As early as 1772 British guns were reaching the Apache through the Osage of the Arkansas and the Bidai and Orkokisa of the lower Trinity; and the exclusion of the English (Americans) became an increasingly difficult problem as time went on. De Mézières vents his exasperation at the expansion of the English colonies, "most of them the product of their notorious usurpations," in terms that sound strangely familiar in the mouths of Mier y Teran, Tornel, and Alaman two generations later.

Professor Bolton's profound knowledge of the manuscript bibliography of the Spanish Southwest is manifest in the many annotations which illuminate the documents. For a time the reader may be inclined to be querulous, in the belief that he is left without assistance in identifying the numerous Indian tribes which appear in various disguises of French and Spanish orthography, but eventually he discovers that all are listed with their synonyms in the index. Since, however, one needs must discover some points in which the editorial work could be improved, the reviewer submits two: (1) Doesn't the use of "*op. cit.*" interpose an unnecessary obstacle to the pursuit of bibliographical knowledge when it entails a search through twelve pages to see which of an author's various articles is being cited? (See, for example, II, 124, note 153; there are a number of such instances.) And (2), since there are frequent references to documents by number, rather than by page, would it not be a convenience to find at the top of each page the number and year-date of the document running thereon, instead of the relatively useless "Vol. one" and "Vol. two" that one does find?

De Mézières's letters are well written, and aside from their historical and ethnological interest, unfold an attractive and forceful personality which would repay the study of an ambitious historical novelist.

EUGENE C. BARKER.